

breaking ground

2021

ANNUAL
ARTS ISSUE

These advocacy flags were created for a project called "Threads of Identity," offered through Friends Life Community, a day program in Nashville. Threads of Identity is a collection of 35 fabric flags, each one designed by a Friends Life artist. Symbols, color, and texture share a powerful message of purpose and originality. Each flag helps to tell the story of its creator and displays the creative virtue that is found in being one's true and unique self.



ADVOCACY FLAGS

TN

Council on
Developmental Disabilities

TENNESSEE
ARTS
COMMISSION
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The cover artists are:



Randle Webber



Inna D.



Kathleen Harbison



Maya Bregman



Natalie Herndon



Carson Wood



Celia F.



Chris Wartenberg



Davis Walker



Sean C.



Kate Williams



Emma Irby



Isabel H.



Dylan Foyster



Grant S.



Grace D.



Anna Claire W.



Clay A.



Travis H.



Carrie DePauw



Elizabeth Bloodworth



Russell H.



Keonna Reed



Sam Nafzger



Ben Summers



Bradley Mullis



Matthew Berry



Josh Laser



Katie Hamilton



Katie Mulle



Alfred Lester III



Tyler Chavez



Jonathan Phillippi



Kaylea Dunkin



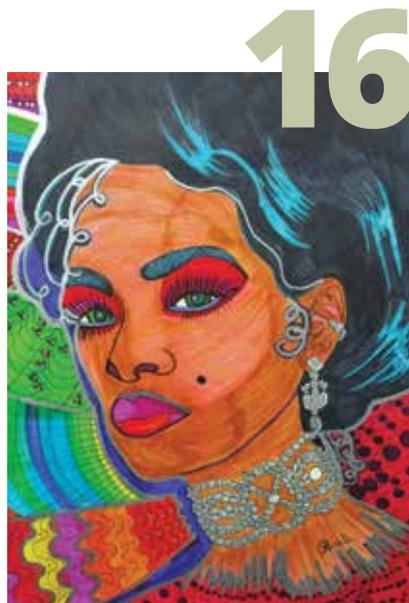
Brett H.



Hugh's custom mittens allow him to use his hands when he plays outdoors in the winter.



Behind the scenes as Jen photographs participant Tyler Samuel



Fine Art Section

2021 ANNUAL ARTS ISSUE

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Learn more about the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities.

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A PUBLICATION OF THE TENNESSEE COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE TENNESSEE ARTS COMMISSION AND BORDERLESS ARTS TENNESSEE



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Welcome to the 2021 Arts Issue of Breaking Ground magazine!

Art can be so many things: a celebration, a mourning, a memory, a discovery, a reflection, a fear, a wish... Often, it's many things at once. Maybe that's what makes art such an important venue for people affected by disability to share their view of the world and themselves.

As you flip through the pages of this magazine, I hope you'll see what I see: beautiful, complex, gifted people sharing a piece of themselves with us. As they do, they help us remember our common humanity. I can't think of a time when that has been more important.

Thank you to the remarkable artists featured here, and to all those who give of themselves to remind us of what it means to be humans together.

Wanda Willis

Executive Director, Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities



TN Arts Commission

Through tornadoes, a global pandemic, and a "new normal" for our daily lives, the year 2020 changed the way we view accessibility. By practicing social distancing and other safety precautions, we moved from in-person meetings and programs to using technology-based platforms as our main way of reaching people. Accessibility has a new meaning as we find ways to stay connected with each other while continuing to support programs and services.

At the Tennessee Arts Commission, we have taken measures to ensure that people still have access to arts programming - including people with disabilities. These efforts have resulted in the Arts Commission hearing great success stories from organizations like Borderless Arts Tennessee and others who have used technology in expanding their geographic reach, reimagining new programming, and finding innovative ways to achieve their missions, all while supporting the creative community.

We are again grateful for this partnership with the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities and Borderless Arts Tennessee as we work together in providing new ways of reaching people with disabilities during this unprecedented year. We look forward to seeing what's next and moving forward in service to people in Tennessee.

Kim Johnson

Director of Arts Access, Tennessee Arts Commission



Borderless Arts Tennessee

It is the gift of the arts that opens doors to careers, enhances school curriculum, and offers social engagement in communities. It is the gift of the arts that opens doors that allow us to look beyond the exterior so that we see the person. It is the gift of the arts that opens doors that foster communication. Borderless Arts Tennessee is honored to once again partner with the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities on their arts edition of Breaking Ground. The talented artists in these pages have elected to share the gift of the arts with you, and we thank the Council for opening the door to make that sharing a reality.

Lori Kissinger

Executive Director, Borderless Arts Tennessee

Vanderbilt's Adaptive Fashion Lab

Fashion, Friendship, Collaboration, and Inclusion

By Alexandra Sargent Capps, director of Vanderbilt University's Wond'ry Innovation Center Fiber Arts Lab

Fashion Empowers!

I believe fashion pieces that express who we are can empower people of all ages and abilities. What better way to build autonomy and confidence for people with physical disabilities than through customized fashion pieces and accessories?

A fashion lab to do just that is growing out of a series of experiences with Vanderbilt students.

First: What is Adaptive Fashion?

Adaptive fashion is clothing designed specifically for people with disabilities who have difficulty dressing independently or who have sensory issues and sensitivities to certain textures and materials.

The Idea

Olivia Murry is a student in Vanderbilt University's Next Steps program. Next Steps at Vanderbilt is an inclusive higher education program for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In the spring of 2018, Olivia took my History of Fashion class. She describes the start of her wonderful friendship with Courtney Lane, a traditional Vanderbilt student, this way: "I met Courtney on our first day of Fashion History class when we both arrived twenty minutes early. From then on, we sat together every day, and did all our class projects and presentations together. All semester we were empowered by our friendship."

From great friendships come great ideas. For their final class project, Olivia and Courtney created an adaptive fashion company. The project inspired our whole class, because their vision supports the creation of a more inclusive world. Their goals for the company were:

- 1) Design and sell inclusive and adaptable clothing through partnering with already existing companies.
- 2) Allow all people to feel confident and comfortable in what they wear!
- 3) Give the profits to Best Buddies (organization dedicated to creating friendships among people with and without disabilities).
- 4) Include custom jewelry made by Olivia, who had already been learning the skill with her dad.

Creating the First Piece of Adaptive Fashion

The next semester, Olivia took my Costume Design course. Olivia often complained about back pain, due to the heavy backpack she carries all over campus. Olivia has Down syndrome, which is often accompanied by scoliosis and back pain. I decided that it was time to put Olivia and Courtney's idea of adaptive fashion into action.

To explore and test how form and function need to work together for stage costumes, the first class project was to design and produce a better backpack for Olivia. We discovered the BackTPack, designed by a physical therapist. It moves backpack pressure to the sides of the body. We purchased the bag and made adjustments so that it fit Olivia perfectly. The backpack did relieve Olivia's back pain. Olivia requested that we decorate it with patches from her favorite sports teams from her hometown of Boston so that it reflected her personal style.



Olivia shows off her customized backpack, which keeps pressure off her back.

Olivia taught our class that functional fashion and accessories can help make the day easier and less painful, and that expressing one's personality through clothing and accessories builds confidence.

More Adaptive Fashion: A Bag for Peach!

Because of the success of Olivia's backpack, I met with Peach Chinratanalab, a Next Steps student who uses a wheelchair. Peach and her parents were very excited



Peach Chinratanalab and her parents worked with the new fashion lab on several adaptive fashion items, including custom pants that keep her legs warm and dry in wet weather.

about working with our developing lab to design a bag that would serve her specific needs, including:

- sitting comfortably on her lap.
- having her phone and wallet easily accessible.
- being waterproof.
- using a zipper closure that pulls in the correct direction to serve her stronger hand.

Peach's parents mentioned that her legs get cold and wet in bad weather. So, we added a zipper to the underside of the bag, with a zip-on-zip-off rain tarp and fleece blanket. Peach LOVES color and pattern, because they match her sparkly personality. So, making the bag in a bright, bold, fun pattern was essential. Collaborating with Peach and her parents to design a number of items, including the bag and some customized well-fitting pants, was a fun and rewarding process.

The Next Step in Creating the Adaptive Fashion Lab

Last summer, I reached out to Lindsay Krech, the Next Steps Co-Director of Career Development to ask for help to further realize Olivia and Courtney's original idea. Lindsay gathered an amazing team to take part in a fall 2020 internship, with a goal of developing the mission for the adaptive fashion lab. The team included two Next Steps students, Rachel Williams and Lydia Young, and two students from Vanderbilt's Peabody School of Special Education, Emily Hong and Annie Kaplan. I am so proud of the work and ideas produced by this wonderful team.

Below, in their own words, is some of their important work:

- Lydia: We conducted personal interviews with people who have physical disabilities. We found that having accessible clothing would give people with disabilities more confidence and improve their self-esteem, as well as encourage autonomy and independence. In our interviews, we got these responses:

Cassidy: "Not asking people for help would encourage self-esteem."

Connor: "Some people with physical disabilities have trouble with the buttons on their shirt. I would like to have accessible buttons."

- Rachel: Through surveys we created and sent out, we found that:

88% of people with physical disabilities have some sort of difficulty putting on clothes.

100% of people said that their clothing should address special physical and accessibility needs.

The mission statement these students wrote perfectly captures the big ideas and goals for the adaptive fashion lab:

- Rachel: Our mission statement is:

The Adaptive Fashion Lab will create one of a kind clothing and accessories for people with physical disabilities and sensory sensitivities of any age or gender. The Adaptive Fashion Lab encourages autonomy and independence for individuals with disabilities.
- Lydia: The Adaptive Fashion Lab will offer many services:
 - Adapt clothing that people already own
 - Make one-of-a-kind specialized clothing and accessory items from scratch
 - Teach people how to adapt their own clothing

I am thrilled with the accomplishments of the fall internship team. Their research and discoveries show that the adaptive fashion lab has the potential to help many people.

Rachel and Lydia Bring a New Project: Mittens for Hugh

Rachel and Lydia's internship outreach efforts got the lab in touch with adorable, six-year-old Hugh Lang, who was born with club hands and no thumbs. Hugh uses his pinkies like other people use their thumbs. Hugh came to the lab with his dad, Matt. He needed, among other things, a custom-fitted pair of mittens. Hugh spent his time at the lab drawing pictures of Star Wars characters! Clearly, any fashion pieces for Hugh will be a hit if they include Star Wars.

Making mittens for Hugh required 1) tracing his hands in order to make a pattern so that the mittens would fit, and 2) figuring out, with the help of his dad, where to add loops so he can take them on and off himself. I

made Hugh's mittens out of a recycled, felted cashmere sweater, with hearts on them made from cotton Star Wars fabric. Matt sent me a note saying: "Hugh loves his mittens. He wore them today. They really give him the ability to do things and play outside. He used to get cold fast and not be able to use his hands. THANK YOU!!!"

Olivia and Courtney Had a Great Idea!

Next Steps students have proven that Olivia and Courtney were right: there is a lot of need for adaptive clothing and accessories for people with physical disabilities. Because of all these students' ideas and efforts, building empowerment and inclusivity for everyone connected to Vanderbilt's Adaptive Fashion Lab is becoming an exciting reality!

Information about the Adaptive Fashion Lab

The Vanderbilt Adaptive Fashion Lab will be located in an accessible space at the Fiber Arts Lab at Vanderbilt's Wond'ry Center for Innovation. The staff will include people with physical and intellectual disabilities, who will be involved in all aspects of the design and production process, including taking notes, reaching out to clients to schedule appointments and asking them about their needs, choosing fabrics and supplies, brainstorming solutions, conducting surveys, and keeping track of tasks. The staff will work with clients at the lab to help them playfully and creatively express themselves through artwork to illuminate the client's favorite colors and patterns, which will then be applied to their customized fashion pieces. ■

Alex is the University costume designer, costume shop manager, and director of Vanderbilt's Wond'ry Innovation Center Fiber Arts Lab. She teaches classes in costume design, fashion history, and fashion sustainability. Alex holds a B.A. in Theatre from Middlebury College, and an MFA in Stage Design from Northwestern University.



The idea for an adaptive fashion lab started with a class project from Olivia Murry and Courtney Lane. They developed a collage "look book" as part of the project.

Dad **By Joanne Sanford Cherpack**

Dad, So Sad to be losing you. At first no choosing you, the boozing you. Never daddy's little girl. Except maybe now as the fates allow and show me how, I'll feel the Wow.

As you prepare to leave we grieve for all you achieved. Nearly ninety & almost 43 years, so many will shed some tears. All you taught in school, and in the rooms everyone presumes you'll be in the Great Pumpkin patch, naturally. It seems your work is nearly done. What a run! I love you a ton. I will surely cry, hating to say goodbye.

Joanne shared, "The arts provide me a safe, rhythmic release for my emotions - clears the head, soothes the soul, releases some control. I sometimes get the opportunity to be brave and share these expressions."

It Will Be Alright Now

by **Brian McHan**

It will be alright now
Said a man to a kid
Who had lost a loved one to a storm
Your loved one will go to Heaven
Where there is no pain or sadness
The houses in your town will be restored to new
Tennessee will recover
And the flowers will bloom again
And some day you'll go to Heaven
And see her again
That's wonderful said the kid
But I'm still sad
Because I wanted to see her today

Brian McHan is a 2002 Partners in Policymaking graduate with schizophrenia. This is his response to the Nashville tornadoes in spring 2020.

Spinning Circles

By **Selina Hyzer**

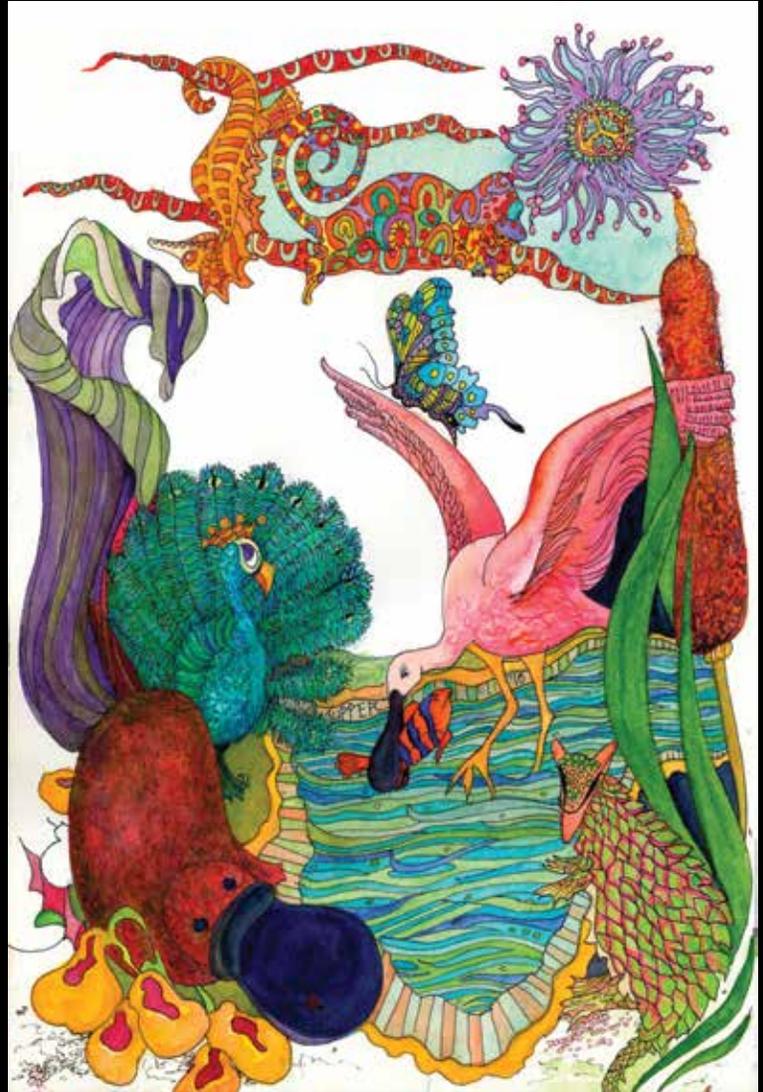
I've tried so hard to make it right again.
The next day, the next hour, the next moment.
I'll try again. I'll make it right. Start over.
Time slips away, and I'm back at the bottom of the well,
struggling to get out again.
Thinking if I could just get to the surface, I could start over to breathe again.
Growing, then withering, The laughter is fading.
Eyes fixating on this world.
Confusing consumption swallows me whole.
So a new day comes, and I will try again.
But the fog takes over me once more,
dragging me into a slumber.
Feeling like a dream I can no longer wake up from.

Selina Hyzer has been creating art ever since she was a young child. Selina says "Art allows me to communicate freely through imagery, when I struggle to find the right words to express myself verbally."



***Safe Patio* by John L. Butts, Jr.**

John L Butts Jr., Clarksville TN: John L. Butts Jr.'s art reflects mostly people and places. John states "When I'm doing art, I don't think about my troubles. Makes me feel good. I enjoy it so much."



***E Platypus Unum* by Kathy Tupper**

Kathy Tupper of Nashville has been creating art since she was 3 years old. "In the process of creating art, I am able to focus on one thing. I am fascinated and exhilarated by the art I have made. How did I do that?!"



***Your Mind* by Sarah Clinton**

Sarah Clinton is the mother of two children, ages 11 and 15. Her 11 year old daughter has autism and this mixed-media painting of her daughter shows her in her own world. Sarah says she often wonders what her daughter is thinking about.



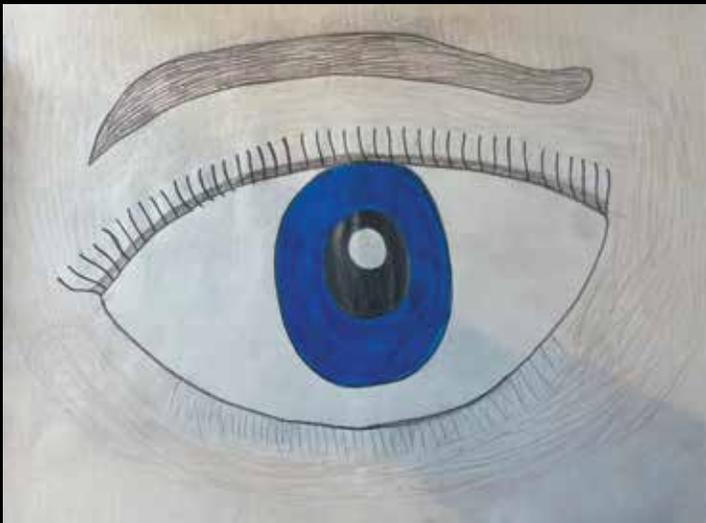
Jennifer by Hope McKee

Hope McKee is a visual artist in Middle Tennessee living with a disability. She works in a variety of media (painting, collage, mixed media, glass, ceramics, photography, drawing, and digital art). As an artist, Hope has found her voice and place in this world.



Aaliyah Grace by Wyatt Bernal

Wyatt Bernal has loved drawing since he was very little. He is very funny and social. He loves his friends and teachers. He continues to amaze family and friends with his art skills.



Untitled by Mia Binns

My name is Mia Binns and I am 15 years old. I love to draw. I spend most of my time drawing animals for children's books, but now I am learning to look into people's eyes. Eyes can be happy or sad. This is a happy eye.



Broken by Houston Vandergriff

Houston Vandergriff is a globe-trotting photographer with Down syndrome from Knoxville, Tennessee.

I AM DETERMINED!

by Jen Vogus, 2007 Partners in Policymaking® Leadership Institute graduate

On a warm spring day in 2019, when driving through the parking lot of a local high school, I found myself admiring all of the professional quality baseball and softball posters hanging on the fence surrounding the ball fields. The larger-than-life images showcased the young athletes in their uniforms beaming with pride, excited to be a part of their school team. Some of them were smiling for the camera, others were giving serious, competitive looks. All modeled a variety of fielding or batting positions.

I was there that day to work with a group of transition-aged special education students as part of a semester-long AbleVoices project with Williamson County Schools. I developed the nonprofit organization, AbleVoices, to teach photography to people with disabilities as a means for self-expression, empowerment, and advocacy. As I parked my car, I thought about the people I have worked with over the past few years, and their wide range of activities, interests, and passions. I remembered young adults who excelled in horseback riding, Special Olympics sports,

post-secondary education programs, musical instruments and singing, visual arts, and more. I thought to myself, "They should have the same types of posters celebrating their accomplishments, too!" And that's when the "I AM DETERMINED!" project was born.

I AM DETERMINED! showcases the self-determination of its stars. In the disability community, self-determination refers to a person taking action and responsibility for one's own life instead of others having to do things to or for them. People who are self-determined choose to set their own goals and then work to reach them. They don't have to do everything for themselves but find needed support to improve their lives.

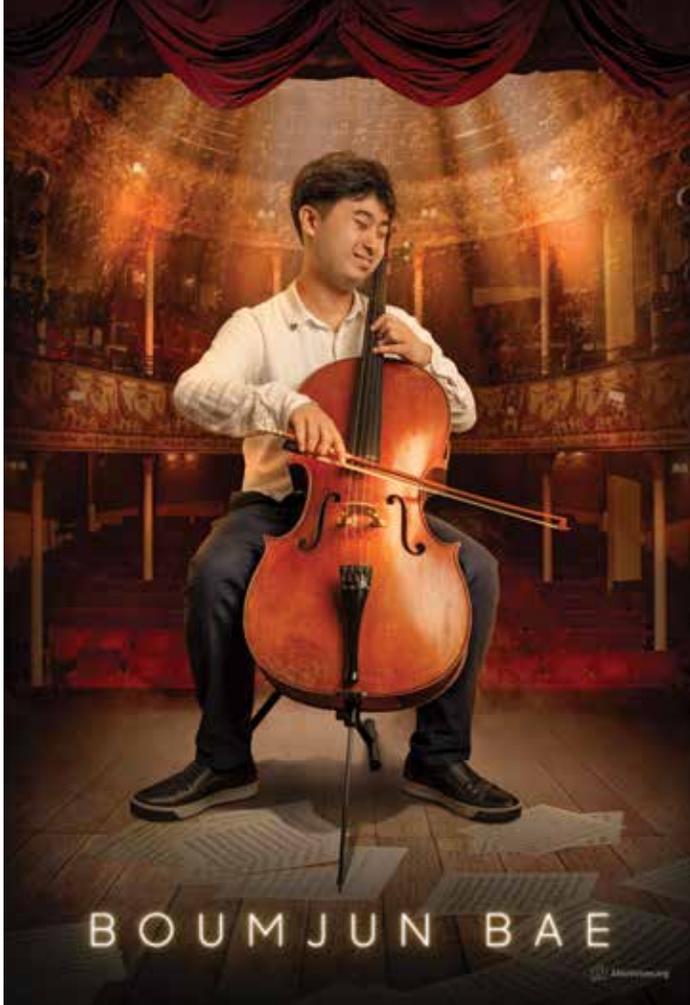
To put a spotlight on these self-determined young adults, they get a professional in-studio photo shoot with me that captures their specific interest or talent, such as a hobby, sport, or job. They wear and bring their uniforms, gear, and equipment to tell the visual story of their skill. The photos are then combined with the expert graphic

Ryan Wallace's poster



Zoe and Zion Redington's poster



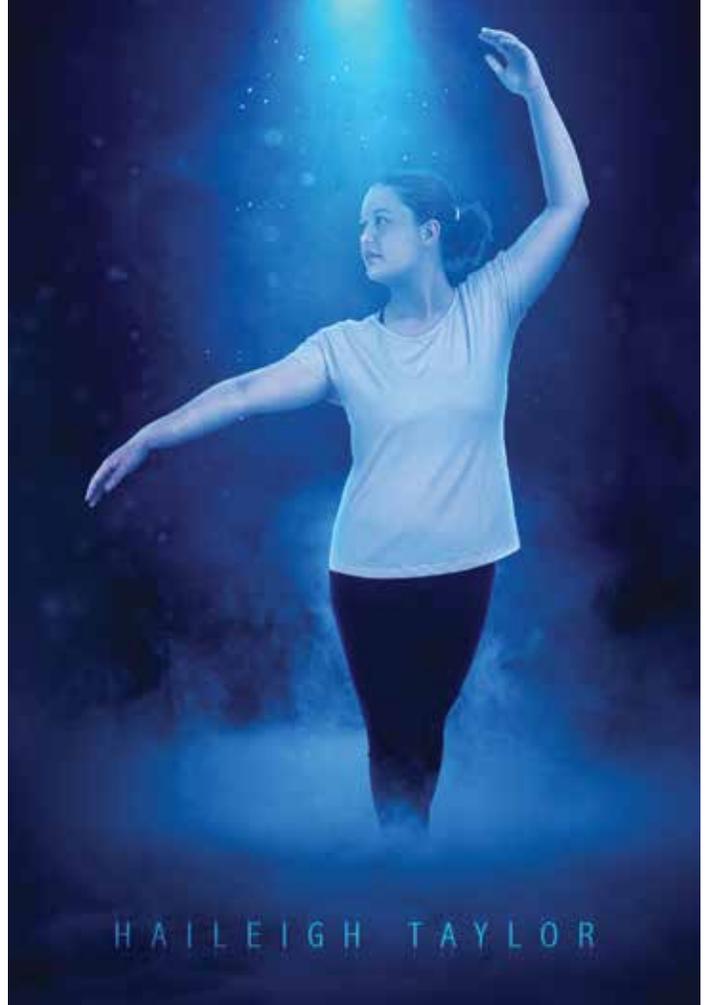


Boumjun Bae's poster

artistry of my brother, Chuck Eiler, who has more than 20 years of experience in the field. Chuck provides a one-of-a-kind artistic background that reflects the unique talents and interests of that person and their passion.

Then comes my favorite part of the project – the big reveal to each I AM DETERMINED! star. Each star receives a 24x36 framed poster along with a digital file for social media at no cost. I love seeing each person's eyes light up as they inspect their portrait, showing them in a world created about them and just for them.

Because of COVID-19, we were unable to have a physical exhibit of the posters and reception for the stars. But we were able to celebrate these young adults virtually in November 2020 with our inaugural I AM DETERMINED! exhibit. The recipients introduced themselves to the attendees and delighted the audience with their wide variety of interests, strengths, and passions. We were honored to have classically trained soprano Tyler Samuel give a keynote speech titled, "We are so much more than the label of our diagnoses." She ended with a moving rendition of the gospel hymn, "This Little Light of Mine." I AM DETERMINED! recipients Drew Basham and Andrew Braach also moved us with their respective classical piano



Haileigh Taylor's poster

and country music performances. The Zoom chat panel was on fire with comments such as:

- "So eloquent, Drew! You have flowing fingers!"
- "Tyler, I want a copy of your speech! Preach!"
- "You rocked it, Andrew. You're Nashville-bound!"
- "What an incredible group of determined young adults!"

You can watch the performances on the AbleVoices YouTube channel. *(See details at the end of this article.)*

Once we can gather safely in person, these posters (along with captions about the star) will be on exhibit at the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center (hopefully in 2021). The exhibit title is, *I AM DETERMINED! Photographs of Strengths, Commitment, and Passion*. Our goal is to educate the public on the variety of activities that people with disabilities do and at which they excel.

In 2021, AbleVoices will accept nominations from local disability organizations for adults to be featured in the next phase of this special project. We're looking for Tennesseans with disabilities who embody self-determination through a skill, job, or talent that can be celebrated in a custom artistic poster.



Bryant Welch's poster

I believe this project is so important because it helps everyone see disability in a new light. It depicts the unique strengths, commitments, and talents of members of the disability community. When others see these images, they see potential, possibility, and joy. I AM DETERMINED! also helps achieve a core goal of AbleVoices – creating more inclusive communities that nurture the talents and passions of all members.

In closing, I share this quote from University of Kansas' Dr. Michael Wehmeyer, as it is the essence of our project: "...Promoting self-determination is about promoting dignity and respect, valuing people, and raising expectations of and for people with disabilities. Becoming more



Peach Chinratanalab's poster

self-determined is an important part of the transition from being an adolescent to becoming an adult..." ■

Jen Vogus is the founder and executive director of AbleVoices, a non-profit organization whose mission is to amplify the voices of people in the disability community through the powerful medium of photography, ultimately fostering more inclusive communities. She is also the parent of two young adult children, one of whom has physical and intellectual disabilities. Learn more and view the 13 poster images at www.ablevoices.org/photo-advocacy-projects/i-am-determined. You can contact Jen at jen@ablevoices.org and follow AbleVoices on Facebook and Instagram.

To see more images and videos for this project

AbleVoices website page with all of the I AM DETERMINED! final images
ablevoices.org/photo-advocacy-projects/i-am-determined

AbleVoices website page of "behind-the-scenes" photo shoots:
ablevoices.org/i-am-determined-photo-shoots

AbleVoices YouTube channel:
bit.ly/AbleVoicesYouTube

Brett Madron is married to his wife of 12 years, Michelle, and has 3 children, Levi, Grace and Joseph. A plumber by trade, in his spare time Brett enjoys creative writing, woodworking and spends time volunteering with the non-profit Global Outreach Developments International.

He Doesn't Speak

by Brett Madron

He doesn't speak but his crooked smile does.
It's as sure as the rising sun.

He doesn't speak but his touch does.
When we wrestle and laugh on the sofa,
when he climbs into my work van demanding
a hug every morning.

He doesn't speak but his tears do.
Frustrations he can't articulate, he clenches
his fists instead.
What's inside won't come out.

He doesn't speak but his curiosity does.
He persists to go, to see, to touch, to taste, to
hear. To experience.
Convinced there's much in this life to absorb.

He doesn't speak, but his watchfulness does.
He'll find you in a crowd to return the bag you
forgot.
Or pick up what fell out of your pocket.
Carry a load too heavy trying to help.

He doesn't speak, but I do.
Insisting I pray for him each night
Or invent exaggerated onomatopoeias that
provoke his enviable laugh.

He doesn't speak, but we do.
We will teach him to mature all the ways he
speaks.

Dreaming: A Poem

By John Paul Tetzeli

I once had a dream that I woke up to find myself in
an apple orchard
And the air was sweet and fragrant
And around me was a foggy mist.
And that I was a child awakening in this orchard,
Knowing that I was a pilgrim
And that despite everything, I belonged there.
I long to return to that dream
Or at least to be able to plant a field of wildflowers
in the middle of a forest
And to live freely and create with my will.
And that in this life I would overcome all of my
fears and sorrows, somehow resolve them. Know-
ing that there is always
hope informed by faith,
I am a man drenched in the rain and sun
On a journey to chase his boyhood dreams
Dreams that sustain me.

John Paul Tetzeli lives in Memphis with his wife Marta and two children, Audrey and Gabriel. He loves writing poetry and engaging in artwork, and is president of the local NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) chapter.

ART IN THE DIGITAL LANDSCAPE

By Lori Kissinger, Executive Director, Borderless Arts Tennessee

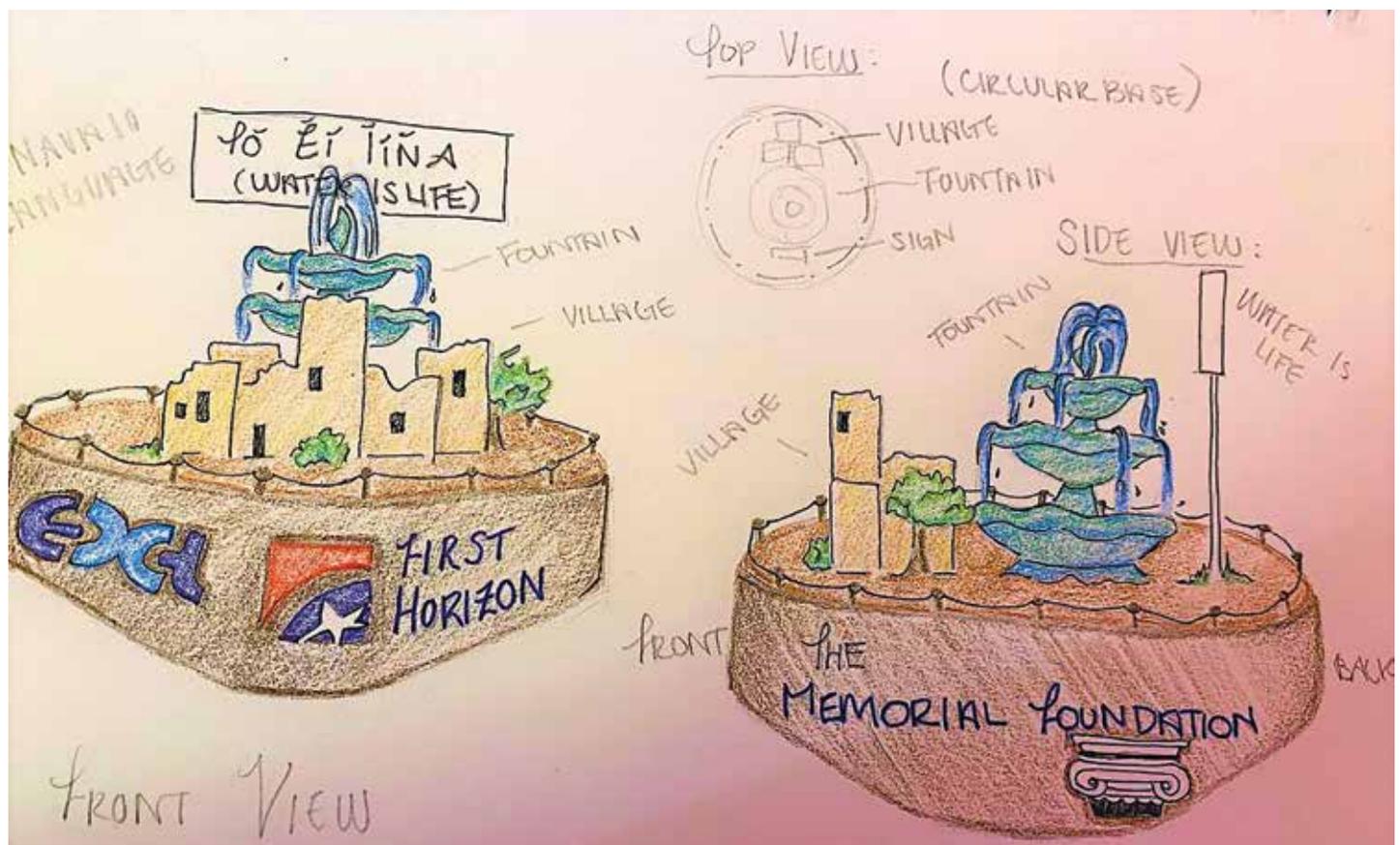
Let me begin by saying that I am not a technology person. I appreciate the benefits that technology brings to the lives of many. But I am dreaming of the day when I can retire to our family farm that exists beyond the reaches of the internet. I share this information simply so you can imagine my horror when COVID shut down the world in March of 2020, leaving the digital trail as the only option for any services to travel.

We were only weeks away from our Borderless Arts Water Warriors program. More than 50 people had been working on the project for months. We quickly transformed

art that was to float on a lake to art that could float through the digital waves on our website and social media. We jumped on the Zoom train and moved our dance program to live Zoom sessions, with recordings posted to YouTube. We spent money on a videographer rather than a venue to make our Young Soloist music competition a real performance. The videographer magically strung videos of performers and announcers seamlessly together in what felt like a live performance. We moved quickly and creatively through a variety of programs and learned some surprising lessons.

By going digital, our audiences increased. People were not bound by travel distance or transportation issues. Even the constraints of time melted away. An event could now live for a day, week, or even eternally rather than for a few mere hours. Our Water Warriors program that brought 100 people to the park to watch the event in 2019 brought over 7,000 people to view the event digitally in 2020! Our summer arts camp could beam in teaching artists from all over the world. In one week, our dance program went from six local dancers to 45 dancers from all over the state.

I also found that I could be at



One design from the Water Warriors project that went digital in 2020

more events. My travel time from one event to the other now meant pressing a button rather than driving an hour and scrambling to find parking.

Considering my relationship with technology, I have been honored, but also amazed, that several organizations and people have asked me what Borderless Arts Tennessee did to make the jump into the digital world. I still do not know all of the new platforms that are out there. Quite frankly, I do not have the time, energy, or interest to spend my days learning the latest and greatest tech tricks.

So, here is advice from a non-techie person surviving in a digital jungle:

1) Know what you need to accomplish and focus on learning the tech that can help you accomplish that task. You do not have to know every technology and you do not have to be an expert on the technology that you learn. For instance, I know that I need a hammer to drive a nail into



A dirt trail or a digital one? COVID pushed many of us to find new ways to travel life's path.



Dance participants share moves over the miles.

the wall to hang a picture. I have the ability to use the hammer to drive that nail. However, I have no idea how to use that same hammer to build the entire house. The hammer is a tool that I am using for the task I need to accomplish. I see technology as a tool and use it in the same way. If I tried to learn and master every new technological platform, I would become completely overwhelmed. I would not be doing my job, which is to offer services...not to be a tech wizard.

2) Adjust your budget. Where we once spent money on venue rentals and travel, we now spend money on videographers and platform developers.

3) Be creative. If I had only one piece of advice, this is it. It is creativity that has guided our organization. Borderless Arts Tennessee is blessed to have some outstanding teaching artists. We have all worked together. It has been those creative energies that have pushed us into a new frontier.

Don't get the idea that it is all a bed of roses. We have lost some participants who just do not function as well doing projects through technology. Our participants miss the social aspect that even Zoom cannot provide. My workdays are even longer, and virtual fundraising is a puzzle piece we haven't yet solved.

Someday, the clouds will clear, and people will once again gather for functions. When that day comes, Borderless Arts will not forget the important lessons we have learned. This new trail has many benefits to our participants and our organization, and we will never abandon it completely. However, I still have not given up on that retirement dream when I can leave the virtual world and my trail consists only of footprints. ■

Lori Kissinger is the founding Director of Borderless Arts Tennessee, which she has led for 20 years. She is also a senior instructor in the Communication Department at Middle Tennessee State University.



Midnight Garden by Kay Sawyer

Kay Sawyer of Nashville has been creating art for 33 years. She has explored a variety of art, such as painting, drawing, photography, and acrylic paint pours. Kay describes how art has helped her as "Beauty in resilience, determination, and desire to overcome the limited, harsh elements and environment to be all that one can be."

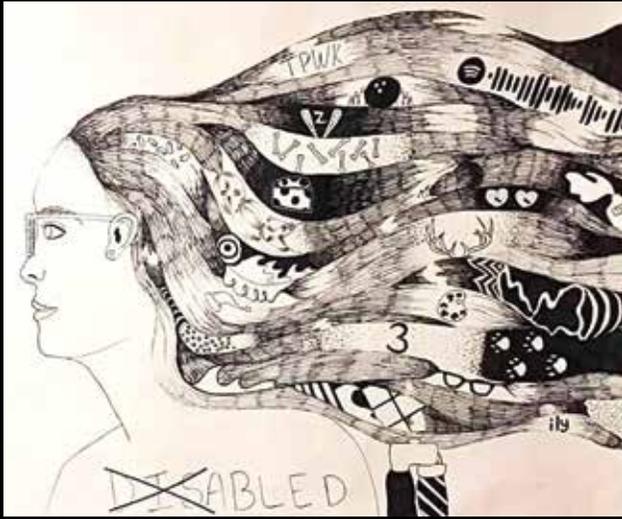
Columbia Tree by Joey McNinch

Joey McNinch is 15 years old and has autism. He lives in Mount Juliet, TN.



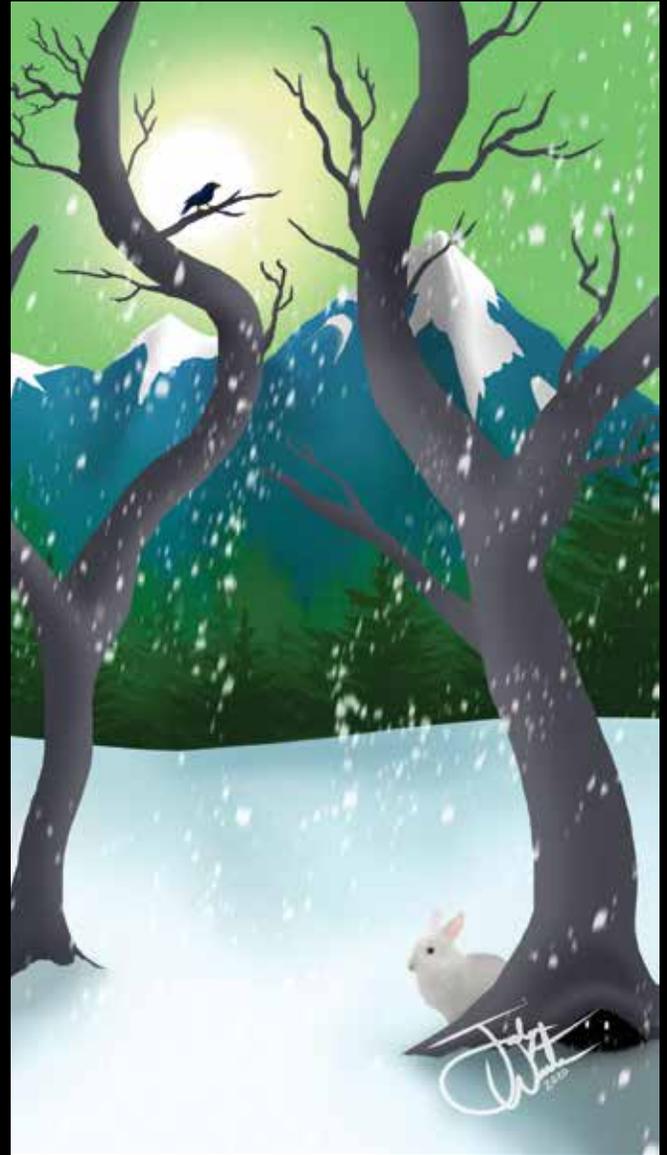
Woman by Laura Hudson

Laura Hudson of Nashville has been creating art for 20+ years, and uses bright colors, and vivid imagery to make her images come to life. Laura states "God gave me this talent to make others happy."



Zentangle by Alissa Warren

Alissa Warren is currently a sophomore in high school; she enjoys spending time with her family and pets. Alissa takes pride in her disability and wants to spread the message to be proud of who you are! "Zentangle" is a self-portrait of Alissa's life and interests, with representations and messages woven throughout.



Enchanted Forest by Jalyn Weston

Jalyn Weston is an eighteen-year-old artist from the little town of Sweetwater, Tennessee who currently is attending Cleveland State Community College to acquire a degree in Fine Arts. He does a variety of pieces, from landscapes to animal sketches, but recently has started making the transition from doing art on paper to digital pieces made on his tablet or smartphone.



Hidden Marsh by Mitchell Wisemen

Mitchell Wiseman of Shelbyville has a very unique look to his abstract work that catches the viewer's eye. Mitchell says "Having others appreciate my art means the world to me."

ARTFUL CONNECTIONS

by Elizabeth and Kit Tisdale

In 2020, Marie Tisdale and her younger brother, Thomas, and sister, Elizabeth, were home most of the time. They were home to stay safe from the coronavirus. They had school online and spent free time doing art and taking photographs. For Marie, making drawings, experimenting with color, and lettering were favorite ways to spend time. Art had been a hobby for many years, but in 2020, things changed. Art became a business.

In the spring of 2020, Marie's grandmothers asked Marie and her siblings to make art and photography cards for them. Their grandmothers wanted to have cards to mail to their friends. Marie, Thomas, and Elizabeth had the idea to make a business with their cards. Summer jobs and internships outside the home were not safe options for them. It was safe to start



Marie at work customizing a Power M card for Jessamine Studios.

a business making cards together. Their online business helped them to make money and to learn how businesses work.

To get started, they had meetings and brainstormed ideas. Then, they learned how to order supplies, make products, organize inventory, set up a website, make sales, and ship orders. First, the grandmothers ordered cards. Then a lot of people ordered cards. They were in business.

Now it is 2021, and Marie and her siblings are building their business. Marie takes art classes to develop her skills. They hike together in the Smoky Mountains and Tennessee State Parks to find inspiration. They are using their art and experiences to develop new products that help customers connect with their friends, like the request made by their grandmothers during 2020.

We interviewed Marie to learn more about the business.

Q: Tell us about yourself.

I am Marie Tisdale. I am 17 years old, and I live in Maryville, Tennessee. I am a junior at Maryville High School. I love art because I like working with shade and value. I listen to music when I do art and when I work. My favorite music is Jonas Brothers. I hike every weekend and I like rocky trails like Andrew's Bald near Clingman's Dome.

Q: Tell us about your business.

It is Jessamine Studios. We sell cards and stickers. We use our art and photos to make cards and stickers. People buy them on our website JessamineStudios.com.



Marie showing her sketch of Nick Jonas that she will make into a card for Jessamine Studios.

Q: Why did you start your business?

We were home during quarantine. We needed jobs. I decided with my brother and sister to start a business.

Q: You are a digital student in high school. When do you work?

I work during school for work-based learning class. I work after school and on the weekends, too.

Q: What work do you do for your business?

I make art, and we pick out art to use for cards. I make cards by printing, cutting, folding, and sometimes adding color. I use the printer and cutting machine to make stickers. I am in charge of inventory, so I make labels and sort the cards. I help my sister fill orders and mail orders. My brother runs the website and takes photos. We do photoshoots for cards to put on the website. We do everything.

Outlawed

by Corin Sharp

Now upon a time, under the rule of King Edward III, there lived within the green glades of Greenshade Forest, near Shanard Town, a dark outlaw whose name was Ryven. No swordsman ever lived that could swing a sword with such skill and cunning as his, nor were there ever such yeomen as the sevenscore men about him. Right truly, they dwelt in Greenshade Forest, suffering neither fear nor overconfidence, but passing time dealing punishments and rewards, and living off their superior skill and cunning like none ever could.

Now, these men were kind and served the people, outlaws though they were. They dwelt apart from others, and none knew them but their own. They wore garments of dark blue, and cloaks of dark green. They were once men that were loved, one and all; lo, they fell afoul of the people, and the favor no longer rested on their shoulders.

Not only were these men outlaws, but they were thieves, and types of criminals by the numbers. Yet the people who knew of them loved them, for no one ever was made poor and lived life of it.

And now I will tell of how it first came that Ryven fell afoul of the people.

When Ryven was a youth of only

thirteen, dark of manner, yet bold of heart, a ceremony of a sort was to be held at the castle of Shanard. "Now," quoth Ryven, "will I too plod along that way, for I have business of other sort there." So, he prepared, and off he went, from his home of Dawsmith Town, through the Monsay Forest, to arrive at Shanard.

Along his path, the trees now thick around him as he trudged the unused path through Monsay. Ryven came across a group of men, each armed with a sword, sitting around a stump.

"Halloa, where goest thou, lad, with rags and a dark look?" one called to Ryven.

"Now," quoth Ryven in response, "Thine business of whatever sort hath not be meddling with mine, therefore shove thy tongue in thy mouth, lest I do it for thee."

"Ho, hear the lad! Watch out for thine tongues, men!" came the mocking reply.

"And what hath thee for wager, lest thee have none?" quoth Ryven, not shaken by mockery by the littlest quantity.

"Thou hath none to wager yourself, so be the most likely," laughed the first who had spoken. "Thee hath none, therefore wager none!"

"Now what know ye, so sure of thy speech?" quoth Ryven. "For surely thy words hath more than pure anger?"

Suddenly one of the group cried, "Ho, men, why hath we grown hot of anger, and let the fool taunt us, while

a solution lies before us? A challenge, each man wager a bet, lest the fool know too well his folly for accepting?"

"Folly indeed! Nay, the folly lies with thee for thine own mistakes," laughed Ryven, free of care.

"I'll wager he could never shoot a squirrel from thirty feet!" cried one man.

Ryven, free of anger, care, or other things to drive him to folly, laughed at the wager. "No better a wager can be made! But I am no fool, with a stone for a heart. Therefore, have another go, and make it quick, for my time grows short."

Now, Ryven knew that their heads were spinning with ale, and that their anger was barely inside them, and that their weakness had been shown. He was not a lad of brawn, yet he made up with his brain.

"Nay! Thou art a coward, and thy only wish to escape!" yelled the apparent leader.

Of anger, the men rose, and charged after Ryven, but he only leaped upon the branches of the tree with ease, and dropped behind the men, and ran along the path, once again, on his way.

Corin is 10 years old, and is turning 11 on March 18. He has been diagnosed with ADHD, as well as autism. He loves to read and write, and is creating a world of his own. He is the son of Council staff member Jolene Sharp.



Marie, Elizabeth, and Thomas Tisdale showing their cards for Jessamine Studios.

Q: What is your favorite thing about Jessamine Studios?

It is awesome. The work is fun to do.

Q: What are you doing next for your business?

We just had a meeting to plan this year. I have new cards to make. I am making thank you card sets. I am making a new card with Nick

Jonas on it. He is my favorite Jonas Brother, and I did a drawing of him.

Q: How can people learn about your business?

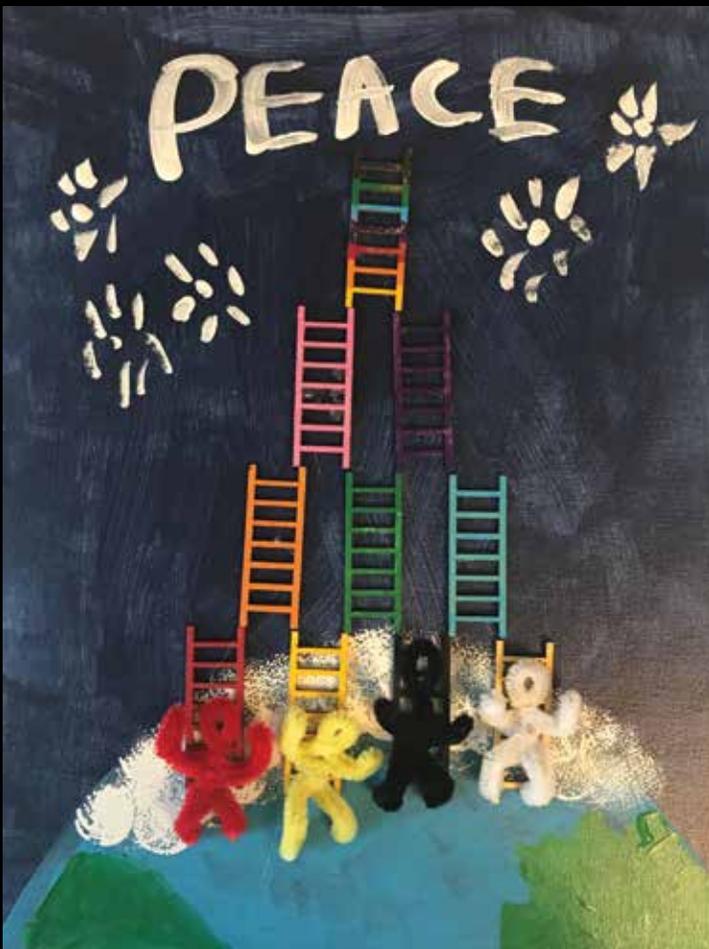
I want people to go to the website, www.JessamineStudios.com. There is a video we made about our business. Watch the video and look at the cards. I am proud of it. I hope people like it. ■

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***Peace* by Morgan Vice**

Morgan Vice is a young adult on the autism spectrum. She co-authored the book "52 Blue Mondays," enjoys painting, and writing songs about her favorite things.



***Untitled* by LeAnn Wilson**

LeAnn Wilson has been painting for about 10 years and says that it is very relaxing and enjoyable.